International Relations · GS - II

Examine the significance of ASEAN centrality in India's Act East Policy and discuss how stronger Indo-Pacific defence cooperation can contribute to regional stability.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

ASEAN centrality; Act East Policy; ADMM-Plus; maritime security; counter-terrorism; strategic partnerships; freedom of navigation; regional multilateralism

Model Answer

Introduction

ASEAN occupies a pivotal position in the Indo-Pacific because of its strategic geography, economic integration and regional diplomatic institutions. India regards ASEAN as a cornerstone of its Act East Policy and wider Indo-Pacific engagement.

Significance of ASEAN Centrality

Diplomatic Engagement: ASEAN-led forums provide platforms for India to engage Southeast Asian countries and major regional powers, including Australia, Japan and South Korea.

Maritime Security: Cooperation can strengthen maritime domain awareness, information-sharing and responses to piracy, trafficking and other threats to vital sea lanes.

Counter-Terrorism: Intelligence exchange, capacity-building and joint training can improve regional preparedness against terrorism and transnational criminal networks.

Economic and Strategic Connectivity: A stable Indo-Pacific supports trade, supply chains, connectivity projects and India's economic engagement with Southeast Asia.

Challenges

Geopolitical competition, differences among regional states, maritime disputes and uneven security capabilities can complicate cooperation. Excessive bloc-based approaches may also deepen strategic divisions.

Way Forward

India should strengthen ADMM-Plus cooperation, conduct joint maritime exercises, expand cyber and counter-terrorism collaboration, and support ASEAN-led regional mechanisms while respecting international law.

Conclusion

A stable and inclusive Indo-Pacific requires trust, dialogue and practical cooperation. Stronger India–ASEAN defence engagement can advance shared security interests while reinforcing ASEAN's central regional role.

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